



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

May 19, 2010

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

I am writing on behalf of Church World Service (CWS), a 64-year-old faith-based humanitarian organization, representing 36 Christian denominations and communions in the United States, to urge you to cosponsor and help enact S. 3113, The Refugee Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Leahy and Senator Levin. CWS is a partner in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, working with its 33 community-based affiliates and its member communions to welcome resettled refugees and help them adjust to their new lives in the United States.

Thirty years ago this past March, the United States Congress enacted into law The 1980 Refugee Act, landmark legislation that created the refugee resettlement program and thus instituted a way for the United States to protect some of the most vulnerable people in the world. This legislation embodied provisions that at the time were novel and created a program to meet the needs of refugees in the 1980s. Over the past thirty years, we as a country have grown in our understanding of the protection and assistance needs of refugees. It is now time to renew our commitment to refugees by enacting legislation that reforms the program to meet the needs of modern-day refugees and the communities that welcome them.

Given the importance of this task, Church World Service fully supports Senator Leahy's recently introduced Refugee Protection Act, which would significantly improve the treatment of asylum seekers and the refugee program in variety of ways. Specifically, the bill's call for expedited family reunification, entry of refugees as lawful permanent residents, annual updates of the reception and placement grant, reforms to the so called "material support bar", steps to even out the flow of admissions, and increasing the efficiency of the visa process would strengthen the refugee program and improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in the United States. We applaud Senator Leahy for introducing this legislation, and urge all members of the Senate to cosponsor it. We also urge members of the House to introduce a companion bill.

Thank you for your time and for considering how we can all act to improve the refugee program. We hope you will support and work to enact this very important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Erol Kekic
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